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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 THE HAGUE 000787

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PARM](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#) [AF](#) [IR](#) [CH](#) [NL](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MARCH 24 MEETING WITH DUTCH POLITICAL

DIRECTOR: IRAQ, GME, EU, CHINA

REF: A. THE HAGUE 766 (NOTAL)

1B. STATE 62815 (NOTAL)

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR CLIFFORD M. SOBEL FOR REASONS 1
.5 (B AND D).

11. (C) Summary: Ambassador Sobel met with Dutch MFA Political Director Hugo Siblesz on March 24. They discussed Iraq, Afghanistan, the Greater Middle East, the March 22-23 EU GAERC meetings and China human rights issues. Siblesz said a new UNSCR would help the government secure broad support for extending the Dutch Iraq deployment. The Dutch are also considering a UN request to help provide security for its personnel in Iraq. Siblesz will accompany FM Bot to Israel, Syria and Egypt from March 29-April 2. The Dutch stress that efforts should proceed simultaneously on reforms in the Greater Middle East and the Peace Process. On EU issues, Siblesz advised that former Dutch State Secretary for Interior Gijs de Vries will be named EU counter-terrorism coordinator at the March 25-26 European Council meetings. EU trade discussions with Iran would not resume until the IAEA gives Iran a clean bill of health. While the GONL has not taken a position, Siblesz reacted positively to the draft human rights resolution on China. He also said that if the EU lifts its arms embargo against China it will seek to strengthen measures concerning China in its arms transfer code of conduct. End Summary.

Iraq, Afghanistan

12. (C) Concerning renewal of the current Dutch Iraq deployment, Siblesz said a new UNSCR was not a "100% requirement," but that it would be "psychologically important." In the meantime, the Dutch are continuing with planning efforts to extend the deployment. (Note: the Dutch have approximately 1300 troops in Al Muthanna Province as part of the UK-led Multi-national division SE. The deployment is scheduled to end July 15. End note.) Citing Dutch practice of seeking broad parliamentary mandates for military deployments, Siblesz said a new UNSCR would help the government gain support from the main opposition Labor Party. That said, renewal of the Dutch deployment without an UNSCR would be "difficult, but not impossible." Siblesz advised that the Dutch were also looking at the possibility of providing some protection for UN personnel in Iraq. This was in response to a request in a March 15 meeting between PM Balkenende and UNSYG Annan in New York. The Dutch might be interested in undertaking such a role along with other nations, including possibly outside of Al Muthanna Province. This might be done in conjunction with a possible reduction of Dutch forces in Al Muthanna, if the situation there permitted. On Afghanistan, Siblesz said the initial feedback from a recent MOD-MFA recce visit to explore options for a Dutch-led PRT had been positive (see also ref A). One possible location may be Baghlan between Konduz and Kabul.

Greater Middle East, Peace Process

13. (C) Siblesz will accompany FM Bot on his March 29 - April 2 trip to Israel, Syria and Egypt. (Bot is scheduled to meet with PM Sharon and FM Shalom.) He asserted that it would be difficult following the killing of Sheik Yassin for Arabs to claim some kind of ownership of the reform process. He repeated previous Dutch points that work needed to be done simultaneously on both reforms in the Greater Middle East and the peace process. He thought any unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza strip should come as part of a drive towards a wider solution, and suggested the EU might be willing to engage with funds if the withdrawal was done "in the proper context."

EU March 22-23 GAERC; counter-terrorism, Iran

14. (C) Siblesz said former Dutch State Secretary for Interior Gijs de Vries would be named the EU's counter-terrorism coordinator at the March 25-26 European Council meetings. De Vries would report to the Council through EU CFSP Chief Solana. On Iran, Siblesz said the EU's Trade and Cooperation Arrangement (TCA) would not be resumed until Iran receives a clean bill of health from the IAEA, which he did not see as likely. Nevertheless, Siblesz expressed doubt the utility of the IAEA Board of Governors referring Iran to the UNSC following a non-compliance finding. He said there was no plan for what would come after such a referral and the matter might stay stuck in the UNSC like North Korea. He felt measures taken to date by the EU3 were "pretty tough," but was uncertain as to whether it might be possible to get the Iranians to relinquish their military program. That said, he thought the current pressure on the Iranians was effective "judging from the complaints we're getting from the Iranians." (Note: Despite Siblesz's skepticism as to the value of referring Iran to the UNSC, MFA sources informed mission in February that FM Bot had determined the GONL was obliged by its November 2003 stance to take a tough line in the IAEA on Iran, should evidence of new, serious failures to comply come to light. End note.)

China

15. (C) Amb. Sobel raised ref B demarche concerning support for resolutions at the UN Human Rights Commission (Amb. Sobel had also conveyed demarche to FM Bot on March 23). Siblesz said the GONL had not taken a position but that he thought the draft China resolution was one that the Netherlands could substantially subscribe to. He noted that the Netherlands maintains a human rights dialogue with China which, he contended, delivers results. He said though progress to date was not sufficient, there was no question that the human rights situation in China was improving as compared to the situation five or ten years ago. Amb. Sobel asked whether action on the EU's China Arms Embargo might be deferred until the Dutch Presidency starts in July. Siblesz said that while consideration had been deferred until after the Taiwan elections, he thought Chirac would raise the issue during the March 25-26 European Council meetings. Siblesz reiterated the Dutch preference to not be the only EU nation opposed to an embargo lift. He also stated that the EU was looking at ways to strengthen its arms transfer code of conduct with respect to China and indicated that he would be open to input from the U.S. on how to strengthen the code of conduct.
SOBEL

